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New Intelligence Chief

John A. McCone, new chief of the highly controversial Central Intelligence Agency, is a Republican like his predecessor, Allen Dulles.

Skeptical-minded observers have pointed out that in naming another Republican to head the super-secret intelligence agency, President Kennedy will be able to continue passing some blame to the Republicans for any future mistakes of the CIA.

In any event, Mr. McCone, a West Coast construction engineer and ship builder, and a former undersecretary of the Air Force in the Truman regime, has the background to do a good job as CIA chief.

But it is a difficult assignment. The Communists specialize in espionage and subversion. They have more people trying to subvert us than we have trying to overcome them. Every Communist card holder is a potential spy.

Mr. Dulles will continue to serve as a consultant on intelligence matters. This was hardly a sop to his feelings, because the difficulties he labored under are fully recognized by the White House.

In view of these difficulties history will be slow to condemn Mr. Dulles for the U2 affair and the Cuban invasion fiasco. He did not have the final authority, anyway, in Cuba. It is said that he misjudged willingness of the Cuban masses to cooperate with an invasion. But their underground wasn't even alerted when the invasion began. Who knows how well they might have cooperated if the invasion had been well planned and the underground fully alerted?